

Summer-Fall Exhibitions at the University Art Museum  
*Sara Magenheimer: Dailies*  
*Chryssa: Gates to Times Square*  
August 8 – December 5, 2022  
Artist Talk and Reception: Friday, September 16, 4:30-7pm



The University Art Museum presents *Sara Magenheimer: Dailies*, a commissioned solo exhibition of video, vinyl text, and sculpture by artist, filmmaker, and poet Sara Magenheimer. Concurrently in our Collections Study Gallery, the UAM presents Chryssa's screenprint series *Gates to Times Square* (1978), which refigures letterforms and characters of neon signs.

**Sara Magenheimer: *Dailies***

"This time of social upheaval has re-invigorated language as it performs publicly, in posters and protest signs, tweets, captions, chyrons and political speeches," writes artist, poet, and filmmaker Sara Magenheimer. Magenheimer sublimates her own poetic language into the work in her commissioned solo exhibition *Dailies*. Ever sensitive to architecture and the body, Magenheimer has created an environment in which we move with and through the language in her videos and vinyl texts spanning the museum walls vinyl installations spanning the museum walls. Still and animated text, appropriated photographs, and intimately scaled wire and found object sculptures offer subtle yet critical reflections on power, politics, and poetics.

The new video work *Sentences* (2022) quotes lines from *Beige Pursuit* (2019, Wendy's Subway), Magenheimer's critically acclaimed book, which reads as both a screenplay and a long poem, now in its second edition. In the video, the words warp over time until distorted into oblivion. Similarly warped vinyl text installations throughout the exhibition are paused in moments of becoming or dissolving. In both video and vinyl, Magenheimer intentionally manipulates text as a way to create friction in the process of reading, to disrupt the seemingly natural everyday workings of language.

Quoting a prompt from iPhone’s AI assistant Siri, the new video *Some things you can ask me* (2022) juxtaposes our present technological moment with the past stylings of the 1980s, seen through *Architectural Digest* photographs showcasing opulent and excessive interiors. Seemingly innocuous domestic decisions about interior decor reflect something more insidious about the ways in which style carries content: What does one’s living room say about political systems of power and control?

Circulating through the exhibition are both pathos and slow-burning anger: a feminist anger most clearly felt in the untitled series (2022) of found headshots of actresses prominent in the 1980s reflecting on the “shelf life” of actresses. Magenheimer figuratively and literally turns signs on their heads, asking us to read them differently—in this case inverting the photographs and displaying them alongside edited résumés whose titles and roles read like found poems.



The projection of a twenty-four-hour video clock (2022) keeps time with the slow, often indiscernible movement of twenty-four flower species that each naturally bloom at a specific hour of the day, based on Swedish taxonomist Carl Linnaeus’s 1751 treatise *Philosophia Botanica*. The work stands in contrast to frenetic ticking of Magenheimer’s *No Clock (You can’t be late twice)* (2017), six video monitors which each display a clock, lined up like clocks on a news or travel agency wall marking different time zones, their numerals replaced by an emphatic “NO.” Time and language also operate in three earlier videos included in the exhibition’s screening room, where we can follow the arc of Magenheimer’s thought over nearly a decade.

We often pause in this exhibition, as we do with Magenheimer’s poignant untitled fishing lure/peephole sculptures (2022) composed of found objects imbued with family memories and electronic “memory” keys. And in these poetic pauses, generated by video, sound, and text, Magenheimer opens a space for us to consider the constructed nature of often invisible systems and substructures that govern our days and ask how, in investigating those systems, language might be a tool, a key, or a trap.

**Chryssa: *Gates to Times Square***

Taking language from the world, specifically the letterforms and characters from neon lights in Manhattan of the 1960s and 1970s, Chryssa refigures them in her series of screen prints *Gates to Times Square* (1978) on view in the University Art Museum's Collections Study Gallery. These sixteen large-scale prints from the University at Albany Fine Art Collections represent an important moment in the artist's lifelong, inexhaustible investigation of text as image. It is as if a word—even a fragment of a word—engendered a thousand pictures for Chryssa.

Emerging from the Coenties Slip group in lower Manhattan in the 1950-1960s, alongside Ellsworth Kelly and Agnes Martin, Chryssa drew inspiration from her immediate urban environment, as well as ancient Cycladic sculpture from her native Greece, and became a forerunner in the use of neon in the fine arts.

The *Gates to Times Square* prints show how Chryssa continued to think through the visual and textual ideas of her monumental and immersive neon, Plexiglas, and steel sculpture *The Gates to Times Square* (1966, Albright-Knox Gallery). Chryssa's interest in written text began even earlier, notably in her baked-clay, bronze, and aluminum tablets of the 1950s and found new form in her 1970s-1980s study of Chinatown shop signs in work she produced in the 1970s and 1980s, concurrent with the prints on view.

One finds in *Gates to Times Square* tangled patterns of saturated red and blue, nested lines in unexpectedly meditative formations, and stillness in her monochrome gray hardedge geometric forms. Recurring patterns and structures appear as Chryssa reuses a core set of silkscreens to explore variable relationships between figure and ground, challenging the ways we read the image.

**About Sara Magenheimer**

Sara Magenheimer is an artist whose work spans filmmaking, video installation, writing, and sculpture. She is based in New York. Recent solo exhibitions include the New Museum, NY; Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (PICA), OR; and The Kitchen, NY. Her videos have been widely screened, including at the Flaherty Seminar, Oberhausen Film Festival, International Film Festival Rotterdam, Brooklyn Academy of Music, the New York Film Festival, Images Festival, Anthology Film Archives, EMPAC at RPI, and the Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago. She has been awarded a 2014 Rema Hort Mann Foundation Grant, a 2015 Artadia Award, the Prix De Varti at the 2015 Ann Arbor Film Festival, a grant from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts in 2020, and a Rauschenberg Residency on Captiva in 2021. Magenheimer authored *Notes on Art and Resistance A–Z*, in the lead up to the 2016 U.S. presidential election. In 2019, Wendy’s Subway published *Beige Pursuit*, Magenheimer’s first book-length work of writing, which is now in its second edition. Her work is distributed by Video Data Bank.

## About Chryssa

Chryssa (Chryssa Vardea-Mavromichali, b. Greece, 1933–2013), known for her sculpture and assemblage, was one of the first to use neon as a fine art medium, beginning in 1962. She studied in Paris and San Francisco, moved to New York in 1954, and also established a studio in Athens in 1992. Her work is in numerous collections including The Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Museum, and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, and the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. In 2023, Dia Art Foundation and the Menil Collection in Houston, TX will present Chryssa & New York, the first comprehensive survey of her work to take place in North America since 1982.

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## Museum Hours Beginning August 8, 2022:

Monday – Friday, 11am – 4pm

Open Homecoming Weekend: Saturday, 10/15, 11am – 4pm; Closed: 9/5, 10/10, 11/24, 11/25

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## Image credits:

Sara Magenheimer, *Is there an after-taste of life in these graves? And in the flowers' mouths do bees find the hint of a word refusing speech? O flowers, prisoners of our instincts toward happiness, do you return to us with our dead in your veins? Flowers, how can you escape our grip? How can you not be our flowers? Does the rose really use all its petals to fly away from us? Does it want to be only a rose, nothing but a rose? No one's sleep beneath so many eyelids? (Flower Clock)*, 2022, HD video, 24-hour video loop; color, no sound, courtesy of the artist

Sara Magenheimer, *No Clock (You can't be late twice)*, 2017, HD video, 03:08 minutes; color, no sound; *HAHAHA/AHAHAH*, 2022, latex paint and vinyl, dimensions variable, courtesy of the artist

Chryssa, *Gates to Times Square* portfolio (3 of 16), 1978, screenprints on paper, 40 x 30 inches each, Collection of University Art Museum, University at Albany, State University of New York on behalf of The University at Albany Foundation, Gift of Mrs. Ivan Radin

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